

STATE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF IOWA

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The Annals of Iowa

Volume 67 | Number 2 (Spring 2008)

pps. 243-244

Iowa City Municipal Airport: Opening the West to Aviation, 1918-2007

Janet R. Daly Bednarek
University of Dayton

ISSN 0003-4827

Copyright © 2008 State Historical Society of Iowa. This article is posted here for personal use, not for redistribution.

Recommended Citation

Daly Bednarek, Janet R. "Iowa City Municipal Airport: Opening the West to Aviation, 1918-2007." *The Annals of Iowa* 67 (2008), 243-244.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.1241>

Hosted by Iowa Research Online

plowing up of valuable prairie farm land during the 1920s. Surprisingly, however, the number of Kansas farms actually increased from 1930 to 1935 as people desperately fled the cities in search of subsistence in the countryside. Although there were demonstrations—even riots—by farmers in Crawford and Wyandotte counties as well as in cities such as Topeka and Wichita, Kansas resisted the militant strategies advocated by groups such as Milo Reno's Farmers' Holiday Association.

Although Kansas had experienced previous radical movements in the 1890s under populists such as "Sockless" Jerry Simpson, Annie Diggs, and Mary Ellen Lease, this time there was no revolt. One reason was that President Roosevelt satisfied the public demand for aid, relief, crop subsidies, insurance, and employment. The 1933 Farm Bill, creating the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the Emergency Farm Mortgage Act, combined with the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the Works Progress Administration, kept the opposition to a controllable minimum.

Kansas in the Great Depression is a penetrating analysis of the Wheat State's greatest crisis since the Civil War. Its focus on local issues fills a significant gap in New Deal literature. The work ethic, not the dole, was a primary Kansas philosophy supported by most of its citizens. Prior to the New Deal, the federal government had never spent a dime for unemployed persons. But Roosevelt found an answer. Peter Fearon's unbiased account of how federal and state officials responded to local needs in a time of crisis represents a methodology that should be applied to other midwestern states. His approach clearly indicates how social, political, and economic factors inherent in the Great Depression affected not only the people but all levels of government.

Iowa City Municipal Airport: Opening the West to Aviation, 1918–2007, by Jan Olive Nash. Iowa City: Iowa City Municipal Airport Commission and U.S. Federal Aviation, 2007. 44 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography.

Reviewer Janet R. Daly Bednarek is professor of history at the University of Dayton. She is the author of *Dreams of Flight: A History of General Aviation* (2003) and *America's Airports: A History of Municipal Airports in the United States, 1918–1947* (2001).

Today, the airports most people are familiar with are the giant facilities associated with the nation's largest cities. In fact, a sizable majority of the nation's commercial air traffic goes through only about 25 to 30 major hub airports. In the early days of aviation, however, smaller airports in smaller cities, especially in the Midwest, played critical

roles in the evolving national air transportation system. That was particularly true in the 1920s and 1930s, when carrying the mail was more lucrative than carrying passengers and the limits of aviation technology required frequent stops along the emerging air routes. During those decades, small city airports witnessed their heyday.

As told by Jan Olive Nash in a short, well-illustrated work, the early history of the Iowa City Municipal Airport was typical of its time. As the U.S. Post Office worked to create a series of airmail routes that would crisscross the nation, it turned to local interests to provide the needed landing facilities. Caught up in the aviation enthusiasm of the time, Iowa City boosters jumped at the chance to place their city on the developing national air map. The airport was originally established through private sector action, but when citizens passed an aviation bond issue in 1929, Iowa City became the first city in Iowa to own its airport.

Like most works on aviation and airports, this history of the Iowa City Municipal Airport focuses most of its attention on the period before 1945, including a very short section on World War II. The decades after the war, when changing technologies as well as shifts in government policy gradually diminished the role of the Iowa City airport, receive less attention. Only a few pages are devoted to the end of commercial airline traffic in 1972 and the transformation of the facility into a general aviation airport.

This history, created in response to the imminent demolition of a historic building, includes a section on that structure, the Boeing Hangar. However, the deliberately modern 1950s-era terminal, built to serve commercial airline passengers, still exists, a reminder of the role played by the airport in the national air transportation system until 1972. This work highlights the vital role played by smaller cities in the development of the nation's air transportation system. It should inspire a more extensive examination of the subject, especially the long competition between several smaller Iowa cities for airline service.

Amish Education in the United States and Canada, by Mark Dewalt. Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2006. viii, 218 pp. Illustrations, tables, appendixes, references. \$60.00 cloth, \$32.95 paper.

Reviewer Frank Yoder is an academic advisor and adjunct professor of history at the University of Iowa. He is the author of *Opening a Window to the World: A History of Iowa Mennonite School* (1995).

In this very readable and interesting account, Mark Dewalt offers historical background on Amish education in North America and a com-